

Understanding the Times

Ethics Unit Study Guide

Christianity

1. **What is ethics?**
Ethics is the study of right and wrong; good and evil.
2. **For Christians, what is the connection between ethics and theology?**
Ethics is inseparable from theology because it is grounded in the character of God.
3. **Define “moral absolute.”**
It is a standard that exists for all people, in all times, in all places.
4. **According to Francis Schaeffer, why do societies need absolutes?**
If there are no absolutes, then there is no final way to judge between differing moral judgments. We are only left with differing opinions.
5. **What is the source of Christian moral absolutes?**
They are revealed in the Bible.
6. **Even though the Bible cannot address every situation, why is it enough for a basic moral foundation?**
It gives enough basic moral law for us to have a sense of what is right in each circumstance.
7. **Describe a Christian’s ethical responsibilities.**
We are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Islam

8. **Who is a Muslim’s moral example?**
Muhammad
9. **Describe Muhammad’s life as it relates to life and morality.**
His life was not guided by morality; rather it defined morality. Whatever he did was right.
10. **What motivates Muslims to behave ethically?**
 1. Personal virtue and morality
 2. Helping others
 3. Strengthening relationships
 4. Preparing for the coming judgment (strongest)

Secular Humanism

11. **What is the ultimate ethical question for secular humanism? Why is it an issue?**
The question is, “which code of ethics should I use?” It is an issue because Secular Humanists disagree about the origin of ethics (is it internal or external)?
12. **What is the “no-truth thesis?”**
There is nothing true or false about moral values.
13. **What is moral relativism?**
Morals are changeable/adaptable to the individual and/or situation.

Marxism

14. **For followers of Marx and Lenin, how is morality dictated?**
It is dictated by biological and social evolution.
15. **For a Marxist, what is not crucial to humanity?**
Morals
16. **How do Marxists explain the arrival of “new morality?”**
It will arrive with the future classless society and its understanding of Marxist dialectic.
17. **Define “old morality?”**
It is rejected religious codes used by the upper class to oppress the working class.
18. **For Marxists, what is the working class’ only hope?**
revolution

Cosmic Humanism

19. **Who defines right and wrong for cosmic humanists? Why?**
Since they are pantheists, they believe each individual defines right/wrong for himself/herself.

20. **How do cosmic humanists judge between differing standards? Why?**
They don't because ultimately no one can judge anyone else's standards as right or wrong.
21. **Contrast the difference between the cosmic humanist and dictionary definitions of tolerance.**
By definition, *tolerance* means to respectfully put up with something about which you disagree. Cosmic Humanists use it to mean acceptance of all moral views as valid.
22. **How does cosmic humanism blur the distinction between good and evil?**
It does not believe in a definite standard of right and wrong. In fact, what is considered *evil* in this life may be (or may have been) good in a different life.
23. **What is cosmic humanism's universal system of judgment? Explain.**
It is *karma*. *Karma* is the total effect of a person's conduct through each phase of existence. It determines a person's destiny.

Postmodernism

24. **From where do postmodernist ethical systems not come?**
They do not come from unchanging universal systems or obedience to non-human authority.
25. **Postmodernists do not like the term *relativism*. Why?**
It means that all standards are equal. They do not believe this. They believe that some systems are clearly better than others.
26. **Explain the development of postmodern ethics.**
Standards are developed by either coercion or consensus. Each culture develops its own standards which are constantly changing and/or adapting.

"Responding to Relativism" videos

27. **Give 2 possible motivations for moral relativism.**
 1. Wanting to get along with others
 2. Wanting to live a certain immoral lifestyle
28. **What does it mean for something to be subjective?**
It means that the individual decides what is true.
29. **What does it mean for something to be objective?**
It means that something is true apart from the individual.
30. **What is a preference claim?**
It is an opinion about what someone likes or dislikes.
31. **What is moral claim?**
It is a statement about what someone should or should not do.
32. **Give 2 common slogans used to reinforce the "correctness" of relativism.**
 1. Who are you to say/judge?
 2. You should be open-minded.
33. **Refute the claim, "you should be open-minded."**
If there is no such thing as truth, why should I be open-minded?
34. **Give 3 kinds of moral relativism found in our society.**
 1. Values clarification—ethical dilemmas can only be answered by individual preferences and cannot be judged as right/wrong by others.
 2. Multiculturalism—all cultures are equal
 3. Political correctness—not offending anyone or anything at anytime
35. **List and explain the 2 types of multiculturalism.**
 1. Weak—learning about different cultures and their distinctives and accomplishments
 2. Strong—all cultures are equal; none is better or worse than any other
36. **List and explain 3 responses to relativism.**
 1. Self-refuting—a person cannot say "don't push your morality on me" without pushing his/her morality on you.
 2. Pressing hot buttons—pay attention to the words *should* and *ought*. These words cannot be used if relativism is true. (Moral *intuitions* are shown more by reactions than by words.)
 3. Force the tolerance issue—There is no rule that I *ought* to be tolerant (if relativism is true).
37. **In reality, what is most of today's tolerance?**
Forced affirmation

- 38. Why is the *argument from evil* not the most compelling argument against the existence of God?**
The existence of evil presupposes the existence of something that is not evil—a standard of goodness—that should be accepted.
- 39. What are our three options regarding moral laws?**
1. They are imaginary—leads to relativism
 2. They are the product of chance—leads to the question, “Why obey them?”
 3. They are designed and purposeful—we *ought* to obey them

“Biotechnology” video

- 40. According to John Stonestreet, what is the most important worldview question in the 21st century?**
What is human?
- 41. Which of the “biotech age promises” is most appealing to you? Why? (This is not a test question.)**
- 42. What is biotechnology? (Put it in your own words.)**
It is the use of living organisms or biological substances to perform specific industrial or manufacturing processes.
- 43. What are stem cells? What are the two types? Which type has already produced scientific advances?**
They are cell that can become anything else in the human body.
1. Embryonic stem cells are taken from embryos and so far have produced no scientific achievement.
 2. Non-embryonic (adult) stem cells have produced scientific achievement.
- 44. Why are stem cells promising?**
They have not yet diversified and have not stopped reproducing.
- 45. What is bioethics?**
It is the study of the ethical and moral implications of the discoveries and advancements in biotechnology.
- 46. What happens when you put a price tag on something that is priceless?**
You cheapen it.
- 47. Compare/contrast human value from the views of biblical Christianity and naturalism.**
Biblical Christianity asserts that people are created in the image of God. This creation is the source of each human’s purpose and value. Value is not based on what we can do or what we look like. It is based on God’s image.
Naturalism asserts that human beings are simply animals with no intrinsic value. Since some people possess values/qualities that others do not, we decided who has value and who doesn’t.
- 48. What’s the best way to live in a biotech age?**
1. Commit to the truth that everyone is created in God’s image.
 2. Send Christians into the biotech mission field.
 3. Be educated about the issues.
- 49. The “public” thinks it is educated. Why is this not true? How can Christians be part of an educated public?**
1. People assume the media always tells the truth.
 2. It believes people don’t have agendas.
- Christians need to learn the correct terminology, engage in the debate, and offer hope.